

William Berkeley Lewis to Andrew Jackson, November 26, 1838, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

MAJOR WILLIAM B. LEWIS TO JACKSON.

Washington, November 26, 1838.

D'r Genl, Mr. Blair has shown me a letter he received from you a few days ago, in which you request him to enquire if I know what has become of the biography written by Major Lee of yourself in 1827–28. I regret that it is not in my power to give you any information upon the subject. I never saw it, nor do I know what he did with it. I recollect his having told me that he had brought it down to the period of your first election to the presidency in the fall of 1828; but that he should not publish it until after you had finished your public life as he intended, if he lived, to add to it the history of your administration. Col. Love informed me, some little time before we all left for Washington in January 1829, that Major Lee had read the work to him, and that it was one of the ablest and most splendid productions, that he ever read or saw.

Not being willing that such a work should be lost to the world, I wrote to Mr. Pageot last winter, when in Paris, and requested him to see Mrs. Lee and prevail on her, if he could, to send all of Major Lee's papers, of every discription, to Mr. Carter Lee¹ and myself. He called on her, as requested, and succeeded in prevailing on her to send them as suggested. Mr. Pageot himself took charge of them and had them shipped for New York about the time he left France, but they were not received in this city until last September. As soon as the trunk came to hand, I sent for Carter Lee and we opened and examined it together; but I was greatly disappointed in not finding the manuscript, which I had supposed had been packed up with the other papers and writings of Major Lee. We found

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a few loose sheets which appeared to be a rough draft of the first part, or beginning, of your biography, containing altogether some 40 or 50 pages. These, I regret to say, were all that we saw in relation to it, and they are now in the hands of Mr. Lee.

¹ See p. 524, *ante*, second note.

Since Mr. Lee and myself examined his brothers papers, I have written to Mr. Brent, our consul at Paris, and requested him to see the widow and ascertain from her if *possible* what has become of the work. *She* must know, if it be known to any one, but there may be some difficulty in getting the information from her. It is possible that she may have retained the manuscript in her own possession, and if so Mr. Brent may be able to get it. I must now soon hear from him, and when I do I will let you know what he says.

Thinking it possible that the manuscript might have been left with Col. Love for safe keeping, I wrote a letter also to Genl. Armstrong, some time ago, and requested him to get Mr. Samuel Love to search among his fathers papers for it, and to let me know the result of his examination. I have heard nothing yet from Genl. Armstrong, and confess I have but little hope of its being found in that quarter. The truth is, General, I am afraid Major Lee destroyed the manuscript himself, before his death, as he became exceedingly dissatisfied at being overlooked and neglected, as he supposed, of which you must be aware from the character of a long letter you once got from him. There may be no foundation for such a suspicion, and I sincerely hope it may not be so, but as stated above I have my apprehensions. In a few weeks, however, I expect to hear from Mr. Brent, and will then probably know all about it. . . .